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UNCLAS COLOMBO 000565

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: COUNTRY TEAM ASSESSMENT FOR VERTICAL TAKE OFF AND LANDING (VTOL) EAGLE EYE UNMANNED AERIAL VEHICLES (UAV)

REF: LOR SUBMISSION FOR VTOL EAGLE EYE UAV

1. THE GOVERNMENT OF SRI LANKA HAS SUBMITTED REFERENCE (FORWARDED UNDER SEPARATE COVER) REQUEST FOR TWO VERTICAL TAKE OFF AND LANDING (VTOL) EAGLE EYE UNMANNED AERIAL VEHICLES (UAV). THE SRI LANKA NAVY CURRENTLY DESIRES TO PURCHASE TWO VTOL EAGLE EYE UAVS IN ORDER TO ENHANCE THEIR SURVEILLANCE CAPABILITIES.

2. AMEMBASSY COLOMBO STRONGLY SUPPORTS THIS FMS CASE AND IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 70003 OF THE SAMM, THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION IS SUBMITTED:

A. SRI LANKA REQUIRES THE TWO VTOL UAVS IN ORDER TO INCREASE AND IMPROVE ITS MARITIME SURVEILLANCE CAPABILITY. SRI LANKA ALREADY POSSESSES UAV SURVEILLANCE CAPABILITY, HOWEVER ITS MARITIME UAV SURVEILLANCE CAPABILITY IS LIMITED. THIS PLATFORM WOULD BE USED FOR SURVEILLANCE OPERATIONS WITHIN THE ECONOMIC EXCLUSIVE ZONE AND IN SUPPORT OF GWOT. A US-DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE ASSESSMENT OF THE SRI LANKA MILITARY IN SEPTEMBER 2002 REPORTED LIMITED MARITIME SURVEILLANCE AND INTERDICTION CAPABILITY TO BE THE CENTER OF GRAVITY IN THE WAR AGAINST THE LTTE. ALTHOUGH A CEASE-FIRE HAS BEEN IN EFFECT FOR OVER TWO YEARS, THE LTTE SEA TIGERS CONTINUE TO OPERATE IN BOTH COASTAL AND INLAND WATERS. GREATER SURVEILLANCE CAPABILITY IS REQUIRED TO MONITOR THE LTTE SHIPPING NETWORK, WHICH CONTINUES TO BE INVOLVED IN GUNRUNNING.

B. THE ACQUISITION OF THE TWO VTOL UAV UNITS WOULD IMPROVE THE COUNTRY'S ABILITY TO REACH ITS NATIONAL SECURITY OBJECTIVES AND DETER POTENTIAL LTTE VIOLATIONS OF THE CEASE-FIRE AGREEMENT BY INCREASING THE SURVEILLANCE CAPABILITY OF THE SRI LANKA NAVY (SLN). THE SLN INTENDS TO BASE ONE UAV UNIT ON THE EX-USCG CUTTER COURAGEOUS AND THE OTHER UAV UNIT ON THE INDIAN MADE SAYURA, AN OFFSHORE PATROL VESSEL. THE INITIATION OF THIS PROGRAM WOULD REQUIRE THE SLN TO GENERATE NEW UNITS ON-BOARD THESE SHIPS TO MAN AND MAINTAIN THE UNITS, CAUSING A SLIGHT ALTERATION IN THE OVERALL STRUCTURE OF THE SLN.

C. AS SRI LANKA ALREADY POSSESSES A LIMITED UAV SURVEILLANCE CAPABILITY, INDIA, SRI LANKA'S CLOSEST AND MOST STRATEGICALLY IMPORTANT NEIGHBOR, IS UNLIKELY TO VOICE CONCERNS OVER SRI LANKA'S ACQUISITION OF THIS CAPABILITY. FURTHERMORE, AS INDIA CURRENTLY ASSISTS SRI LANKA IN SURVEILLANCE OPERATIONS, INCLUDING PATROLS OF THE PALK STRAIT, INDIA WOULD LIKELY VIEW SRI LANKA'S ACQUISITION OF VTOL UAVS FAVORABLY, AS ANY INCREASED SURVEILLANCE CAPABILITY BY THE SLN WOULD REDUCE INDIAN NAVY RESPONSIBILITIES.

D. TRAINING IN THE OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE OF THE VTOL UAVS WOULD BE REQUIRED AS A PART OF THE FMS PACKAGE. THE SLN WOULD LIKELY TRAIN DEDICATED PERSONNEL TO FOCUS ON MAINTENANCE OF THE UNITS. WITH APPROPRIATE TRAINING, SLN OPERATORS AND MAINTAINERS SHOULD HAVE NO TROUBLE KEEPING SUCH SYSTEMS RUNNING.

E. THIS SALE WOULD BE FINANCED WITH COUNTRY FUNDS. THESE EXPENSES WERE NOT INCLUDED IN THE ANNUAL DEFENSE PROCUREMENT BUDGET FOR 2004, HOWEVER, SENIOR OFFICIALS HAVE INDICATED THAT FUNDING WOULD BE MADE AVAILABLE. THE OVERALL ECONOMIC IMPACT OF THE TRANSFER ON THE SRI LANKA ECONOMY IS INSIGNIFICANT.

F. ALTHOUGH HUMAN RIGHTS CONSIDERATIONS CONTINUE TO BE A PRIORITY WITH AMEMBASSY COLOMBO, THE GENERAL LEVEL OF HUMAN RIGHTS GUARANTEES IS GOOD AND IMPROVING CONTINUOUSLY IN SRI LANKA. THIS CONSIDERATION SHOULD NOT AFFECT THE PROPOSED SALE.

G. AMEMBASSY STRONGLY RECOMMENDS THE APPROVAL OF THIS PROPOSED SALE.

3. POC FOR THIS ACTION IS LTC RICHARD S. GIRVEN, ARMY AND DEFENSE ATTACHE, USDAO COLOMBO, OR MS. HEATHER CARTER, MARITIME PROGRAMS SPECIALIST, USDAO COLOMBO.

LUNSTEAD